

REMARKS

This paper is filed in response to the Office Action mailed November 24, 2004, in which claims 1-57 were pending in the above-referenced application. Claims 8, 14, 17, 28, and 37 remain withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1-2, 6, 7, 10, 12-13, 16, 18-19, 24, 26-27, 38-39, 46 and 48-51 were rejected. Claims 29-36, 40-45 and 52-57 were allowed and claims 3-5, 11, 15, 20-23, 25 and 47 were objected to. By this paper, independent claims 18, 38, 39, and 46 have been amended.

Applicants extend appreciation to the Examiner for the Interview conducted with Applicants' attorney on April 19, 2005. As agreed in the Interview, the holding means and locking means as recited in claim 1 define the recited invention over Daniel. Independent claims 18, 38, 39, and 46 have been amended to include the limitations discussed in the Interview. Claim 47 has been amended in light of the amendments made to claim 46.

Claims 18, 38, and 39 have been amended to clarify that the mated locking components are separate relative to the holding tabs and are different structures relative to the holding tabs. Daniel has hooks 20 which hold the tissue and interlock the coupling devices together. In contrast, the holding tabs do not lock the plates together as this is separately achieved by the mated locking components.

Claim 18 further recites that "the first compression plate and the second compression plate have mated locking components to lock the compression plates together without requiring penetration through the first vessel by the locking components." While the first vessel portion may be inadvertently penetrated, it is not

necessary for the first vessel portion to be partially or completely penetrated via the locking components.

A limitation has been added to the method recited in claim 46 to recite that steps e-f are achieved without relying on the first vessel portion being pierced by the plurality of holding tabs. In contrast to Daniel, it is not necessary to pierce the first vessel in order to evert the first vessel portion and lock the plates together.

In view of the foregoing, it is believed that all of the claims are patentable in their present form, and a notice of allowance for this case is respectfully requested. As mentioned above, if the Examiner finds any remaining impediment to the prompt allowance of this application, please contact the undersigned attorney.

DATED this 24TH day of MAY 2005.

Respectfully submitted,



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